

Calvert Packing Company

CT-1280

Solomons, Calvert County, Maryland

1925-1927

Private access

The privately owned Calvert Packing Company building is located within the boundaries of Solomons Town Center at 13834 H.G. Trueman Road. The two-acre property site is accessed via a dirt lane extending east from the public road. The Calvert Packing Company building was constructed beginning in 1925 on Lime Bank Cove on Back Creek, a tributary of the Patuxent River, north of Solomons and south of Newtown, Calvert County, Maryland. The original two-story board-and-batten-sheathed frame building with standing seam metal roofing measured 80 feet by 48 feet and was constructed by J.L. Townsend for company partners Halvor H. Hellen, Wilson W. Dowell, and Harry B. Trueman. The structure was built to house a tomato processing and packing factory that purchased raw tomatoes from local farmers and employed local labor to operate the plant. Beginning in 1925, tomatoes were processed and shipped by boat from the company's wharf to market under its own Leonard Calvert brand name as well as under contract to other packing companies. The building was enlarged in 1927 and, with additions on its north, south, and west sides, reached 112 feet by 82 feet. The structure currently houses two marine businesses.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. CT-1280

1. Name of Property

(indicate preferred name)

historic Calvert Packing Company

other Solomons tomato cannery

2. Location

street and number 13834 H G Trueman Road ☐ not for publication

city, town Solomons ☐ vicinity

county Calvert

3. Owner of Property

(give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Wilson, Oswald Jr. and James Compton Wilson

street and number P.O. Box 127 telephone 410-741-5125

city, town Solomons state MD zip code 20688-0127

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Calvert County Courthouse liber ABE/447 folio 541

city, town Prince Frederick tax map 44 tax parcel 220 tax ID number

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☐ Contributing Resource in National Register District
☐ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
☐ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
☐ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
☐ Recorded by HABS/HAER
☐ Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT
☒ Other: Calvert Marine Museum, P.O. Box 97 Solomons, MD 20688

6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count		
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	<input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture	1	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> defense	<input type="checkbox"/> religion		sites
<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input type="checkbox"/> domestic	<input type="checkbox"/> social		structures
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		objects
		<input type="checkbox"/> funerary	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress		Total
		<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> unknown		
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care	<input type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use		
		<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> other:		

Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory

7. Description

Inventory No. CT-1280

Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Summary:

The Calvert Packing Company building was constructed as a tomato processing and packing factory in southern Calvert County, just north of Solomons Island, Maryland, beginning in 1925 and operated in that capacity for several years. This building is situated on a cove on the west side of Back Creek, a tributary of the Patuxent River, just east of H.G. Trueman Road. Additions were later made to the north, south, and west sides. The original two-story board-and-batten-sheathed building with metal roofing measures 80 feet by 48 feet. A September 1925 *Calvert Gazette* article described the building as measuring 80 feet by 64 feet, indicating that a 16 feet wide shed roof addition along the south sidewall was an early modification to the structure. Subsequently, a frame addition with louvered clerestory was made on the west gable end and another shed roofed addition was added along its north sidewall. The main 80 feet by 48 feet structure and a portion of the western addition are extant and are being shared by a fiberglass boat repair business and marine engine repair business. The survival of the wings' concrete foundation pads allows a reconstruction of the building's footprint.

Description:

Architectural historian Kirk Ranzetta, in a report commissioned by the Calvert Marine Museum, describes the building and its significance as follows:

The gradual demise of large-scale maritime and agricultural-related industries, such as tomato canning, has often necessitated the adaptive reuse of buildings like the Calvert Packing Company Building. Situated near the waterside community of Solomons, Maryland, the Calvert Packing Company Building offers graphic testimony of the economic changes that have occurred in lower Calvert County during the latter half of the twentieth century. Erected in 1925, the frame warehouse-like building presently serves as a boat-repair shop.

The building itself is a post-and-girt frame, two-story building with a long gable roof. Resting on a poured concrete perimeter foundation, the circular-sawn frame walls are sheathed with board-and-batten siding fastened with wire nails. The gable roof is covered with raised-seam metal attached to circular sawn shingle lathe. Over the years, the fenestration of the building has been dramatically modified, but enough evidence remains to at least describe the windows used for the building. Most windows, for instance, were merely propped open with no evidence for screens. Examples of these windows can particularly be seen on the west elevation of the addition. Windows for the upper story, partially sheltered by the overhanging eaves, consisted of sliding pieces of plywood that could be moved back and forth. The cornice of the building was left unenclosed.

Evidence on the north and south sides of the building reveals that the building was modified after it was constructed in 1925. On the north and south sides, for instance, wings were appended to the building, while on the west side, a frame addition was constructed. On both the north and south sides, the intersection of the wing roofs are revealed by the partial removal of battens and horizontal remnants of roof flashing. The addition's later date is confirmed by the survival of board-and-batten sheathing on the west gable end of the original building. The west addition's roof is lower than that of the original structure and is distinguished by the louvered clerestory that appears along the ridgeline. What appears to be evidence of some kind of conveyor shelter is situated on the south slope of the addition's roof.

The footprint of the entire building can also be reconstructed by the survival of the concrete pads of the wings. Here, a number of gutters that run in a north to south direction can be discerned on the north side. They presumably helped to funnel any excess water that was used during the canning process. Interestingly, near the northwest corner of the building, inscribed in the concrete is a scripted inscription that reads "J. L. Townsend 1925, E N M MD." More research is needed, however, in order to determine who the individual is and what connection he or she holds with the property.

The framing of the building is largely predicated on a sixteen-foot bay system pre-determined by the use of standardized lumber available at sixteen-foot intervals during the early twentieth century. Framed similarly to tobacco barns erected in Southern Maryland during the same period, the lightly framed, exterior walls are up-braced both longitudinally and transversely.

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order to solidify the roof framing scissor trusses are used in combination with tie-beams stiffened by down-braces from the rafters. The upstairs floor is well supported by large floor joists supported by large, braced posts.

Unfortunately, no evidence remains on the interior to reconstruct how the interior was organized. No evidence of original partitions is currently visible. Even in the upstairs portion of the building, the floorboards reveal no remnant of what industrial function occurred in this space.

Site visits in 2002 show the original 80 feet by 48 feet gable roofed structure and 32 feet by 64 feet of the western addition are extant. The 18 feet by 32 feet foundations of northern side of the western addition as well as the foundations of the 18 feet by 80 feet northern shed addition and southern 16 feet by 80 feet shed addition foundations also survive. No visible evidence of the auxiliary buildings, mentioned in a 1925 newspaper article, was discerned and archeological investigation of such remains was not undertaken. The location of the company's pier is evidenced by pilings visible to the east of the structure at low tides.

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science	
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history	
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation	
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:	

Specific dates 1925-1934 **Architect/Builder** J.L. Townsend

Construction dates 1925

Evaluation for:

☐ National Register ☐ Maryland Register ☒ not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

Summary:

The Calvert Packing Company building was constructed beginning in 1925 on a two-acre lot situated on Lime Bank Cove on Back Creek, a tributary of the Patuxent River, north of Solomons Island, Calvert County, Maryland. The original two-story board-and-batten-sheathed frame building with standing seam metal roofing measured 80 feet by 48 feet and was constructed by J.L. Townsend for company partners Halvor H. Hellen, Wilson W. Dowell, and Harry B. Trueman. The structure was built to house a tomato processing and packing factory, thus providing seasonal labor to a local workforce and creating a demand for raw tomatoes that was supplied by local farmers. From 1925 local tomatoes were processed and shipped by boat from the company's wharf to various markets under the Leonard Calvert Brand name as well as under contract to other packing companies.

Description:

A September 1925 *Calvert Gazette* newspaper article described the factory building as measuring 80 feet by 64 feet, indicating that a 16 feet wide shed addition on its south side was an early modification to the structure. According to the company's account book, the building was further enlarged with the addition of a "new shed" with a metal roof and concrete floor in 1927. The main building and 32 by 64 feet of the west wing addition are largely intact, although it appears from the foundation that the western addition originally measured 32 feet by 82 feet. The 16 feet by 80 feet southern and the 18 feet by 80 feet northern shed additions, as well as the northern 18 feet of the western addition are not extant, although their concrete foundations and evidence of where their roofs joined to the main building survive. In its heyday, the building's footprint measured 112 feet by 82 feet.

The 1925 newspaper article described the company as "operating one of the most modern and best equipped canning factories in the state." In addition to the factory building, the article states that the power plant was located in a separate building. The article also states that there was a separate business office and a combination dining hall, kitchen and dormitory that was just being completed. None of these latter structures are extant. The Southern Maryland Immigration Commission's *Sunny Southern Maryland* booklet (undated) features a photograph of the plant in its prime. The photo shows two small buildings to the southwest of the factory, a small pier in the cove to its north and a substantial pier with small warehouse to its east. A tall smokestack indicates the separate power plant building was south of the factory building.

Company records show that the cannery's workforce varied in size and composition depending on the season. Generally, the tomato packing season extended from mid-August to mid-October and local labor was employed at the plant. The workforce included both African American and white men and women. According to the 1925 newspaper account, an experienced operator was brought in to run the plant in 1925. Company records suggest that he had one or two assistants who may have acted as foremen. A fireman was employed who operated and maintained the power plant that consisted of steam engines that provided power to the conveyor system and other machinery. A varying number of men and women were "skinners" who removed the skins from the scalded tomatoes and prepared them for packing. From four to seven women worked as "packers" who would fill and cap the tins of tomatoes. A couple of women were employed late in the season as "labelers" whose job was to paste the paper labels on the tins. A few men were also engaged as general laborers necessary to tote the baskets of raw tomatoes and cases of packed tomatoes. Depending on the task, most

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employees were paid by the hour while a few were compensated on a piecework basis. Aside from the plant operator and assistant, employment was provided to the workforce for approximately a two-month season. In its first year of operation, over \$3,600.00 in wages were paid to the cannery's seasonal workforce.

The two-acre property site retains its original boundaries and is accessed via a dirt road extending east from the public road (now named H.G. Trueman Road). Raw tomatoes were bought by the bushel basket from farmers in the area and shipped by farm wagon or truck, via the lane leading to the public road, or by boat to the cannery's dock. To meet the demand of the factory, the local newspaper stated, "tomatoes are being raised on most of the farms in the lower part of the county, and thus the farmers are finding another source of income and employment for a large number of our local people." In its first season of operation, the company account book shows that over 44,000 baskets of raw tomatoes were purchased from local farmers at a rate of 20 to 30 cents per basket. Local farmers earned over \$13,000.00 from the sale of raw tomatoes to the company in 1925.

During the 1925 season, 26,000 cases of tomatoes, containing a total of 624,000 two-pound cans, were packed and shipped from the company. Large shipments of 1000 or more cases were made to distributors in South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana with smaller shipments destined for markets in Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, New Hampshire, and Maine.

The cannery formerly possessed a small pier on its north side for smaller vessels and a more substantial pier on its east side, enabling access to deep water on Lime Bank Cove on Back Creek. The company's account book indicates that machinery, equipment, supplies, and coal were received via schooner. Likewise, canned tomatoes were shipped from the factory by schooner. In 1925, schooners hauling freight to and from the company included the *Annie Belle*, Captain Alex Butler, *Bohemia*, Captain Dan Riggin, and *Wm. M. Powell*, Captain Fred Lankford. (According to a 1982 interview with G.W. Hutchins, Alexander Butler was the only African American schooner captain in the area at that time.) Pilings from the larger pier are still visible at low tide in the cove east of the building.

The 1925 newspaper article states that the factory "was equipped with the most modern machinery known to the business. The arrangement of equipment has been carefully studied with a view of minimizing danger to the employes (sic) and toward operating the plant in a most cleanly and sanitary way." Although the company account books provide good detail on the steam engines, conveyors, and related canning machinery and equipment that were procured by the company, there is no surviving evidence on the interior of the structure to indicate how the factory was physically organized.

Company records indicate that the tomato canning business was successful for its first several years of operation. Near the end of the decade, business began dropping off, possibly as consequence of economic depression or competition from similar industries in the tidewater region. There is no record of tomatoes being canned at the factory from 1932 through 1934, although recurring costs, such as insurance premiums, interest on bank loans, and county property taxes, continued to be paid. In 1935, believed to be its last year of operation, it was part of the Hillsboro-Queen Anne Cooperative Corporation.

The property remained in possession of its original owners until 1965 but was used only for storage. The factory building is currently leased to two commercial marine businesses.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. CT-1280

Calvert Gazette, September 5, 1925, page 1, column 2 (Vol. XL, No. 2)

Calvert Packing Company Collection, CMM MS 007, Calvert Marine Museum Archives

Dodds, Richard J., *Solomons & Vicinity An Illustrated History and Walking Tour* (Calvert Marine Museum: 1995)

Hurry, Robert J., "An Alternate Industry for Solomons: The Calvert Packing Company," (*Bugeye Times*, Vol. 27, No. 2: 2002)

Hutchins, George Washington, oral history interview, 06/17/1982, PRP-PJR 55 (Calvert Marine Museum Archives)

Ranzetta, Kirk E. "The Calvert Packing Company Building" (manuscript on file, Calvert Marine Museum: 2002)

Southern Maryland Immigration Commission, *Sunny Southern Maryland*, undated

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property _____

Acreage of historical setting 2.0

Quadrangle name Solomons Island, MD

Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The building is located at 13834 H.G. Trueman Road in Solomons, Maryland. Its lot is identified as parcel 220 on tax map 44. A verbal description of the historical boundary of the two-acre lot is given in liber AAH 12, folio 262.

Refer to accompanying detail of Solomons Island MD 7.5 quadrangle for relative location.

11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Robert Hurry/ Registrar		
organization	Calvert Marine Museum	date	June 20, 2002
street & number	P.O. Box 97	telephone	410-326-2042, ext. 35
city or town	Solomons	state	MD

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600



CT-1280

CT-1280
CALVERT PACKING COMPANY BUILDING
CALVERT COUNTY, MARYLAND

U.S.S.C.S. Photo AHS10-46 detail
National Archives Record Group No. 145
Aerial photo taken April 24, 1938

↑ NORTH

CT-1280

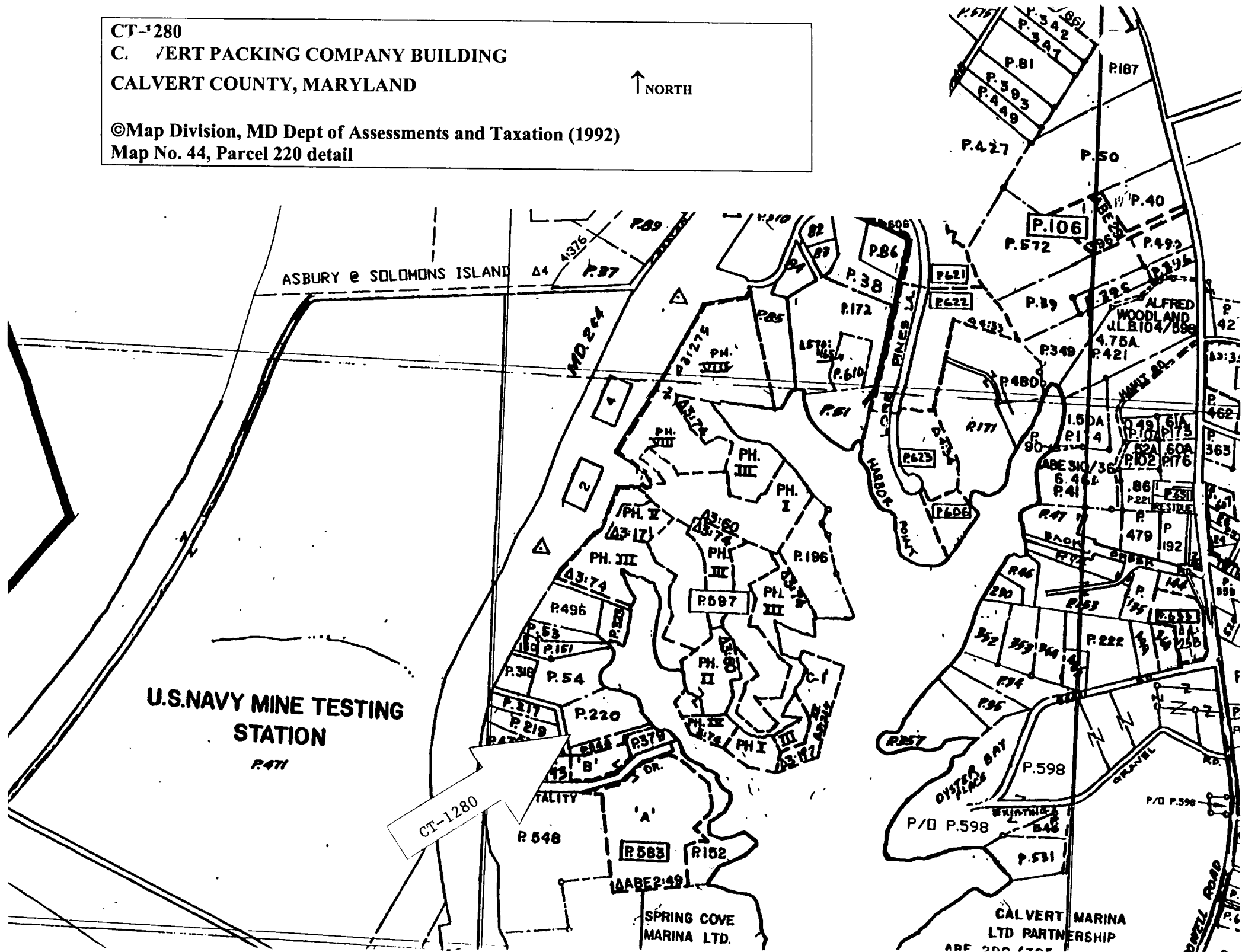
CALVERT PACKING COMPANY BUILDING

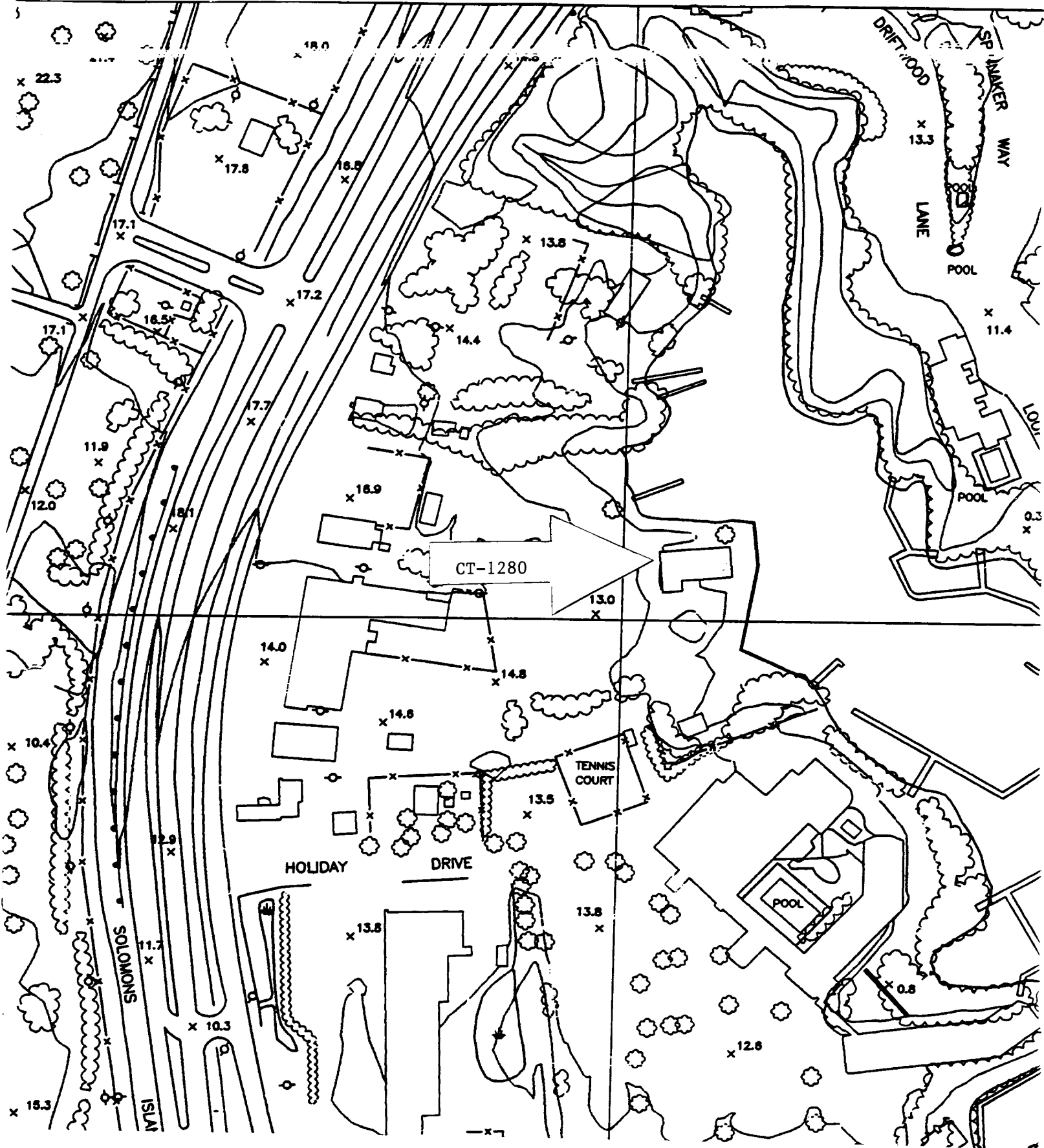
CALVERT COUNTY, MARYLAND

©Map Division, MD Dept of Assessments and Taxation (1992)

Map No. 44, Parcel 220 detail

↑ NORTH

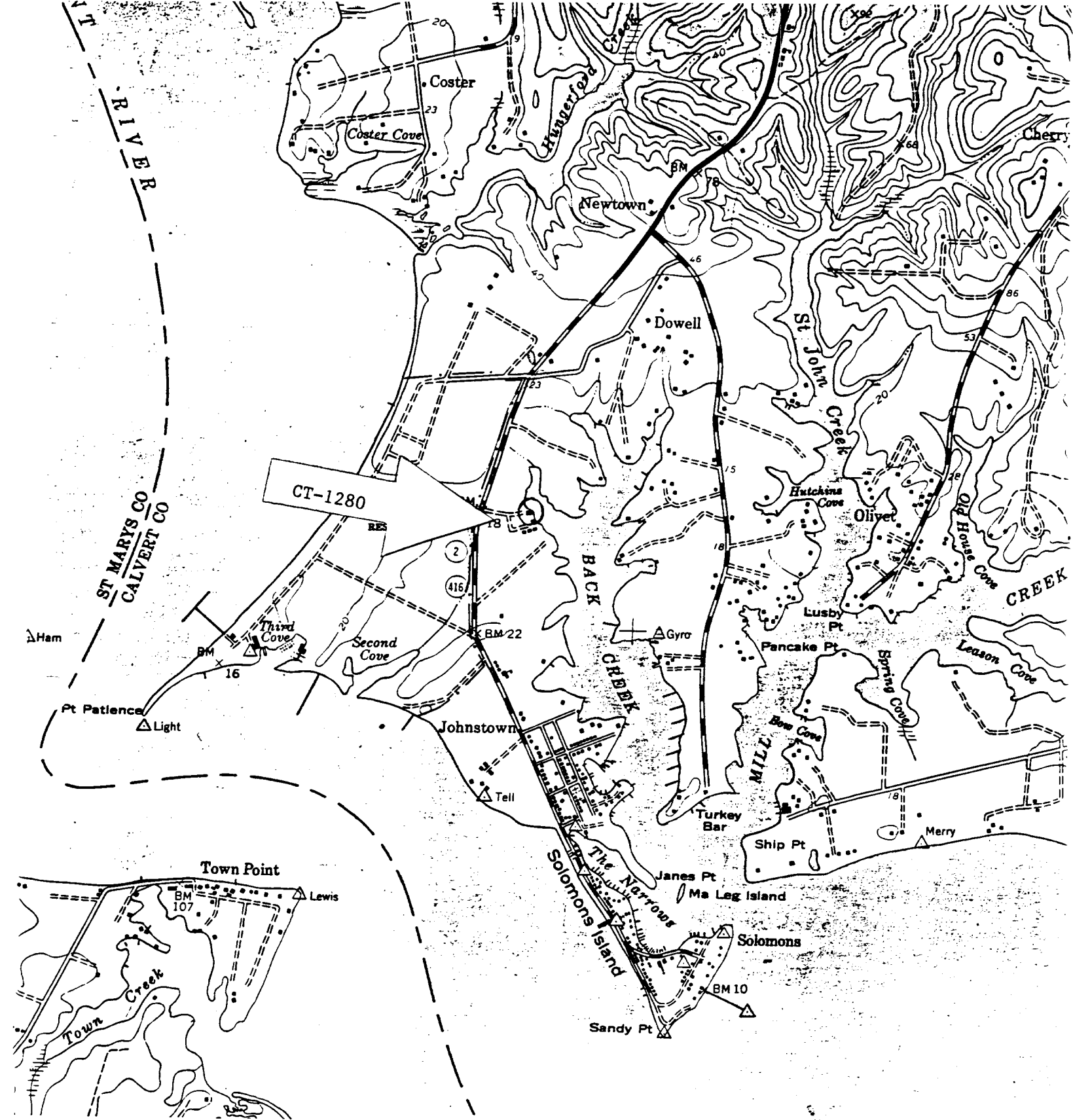




CT-1280
CALVERT PACKING COMPANY BUILDING
CALVERT COUNTY, MARYLAND

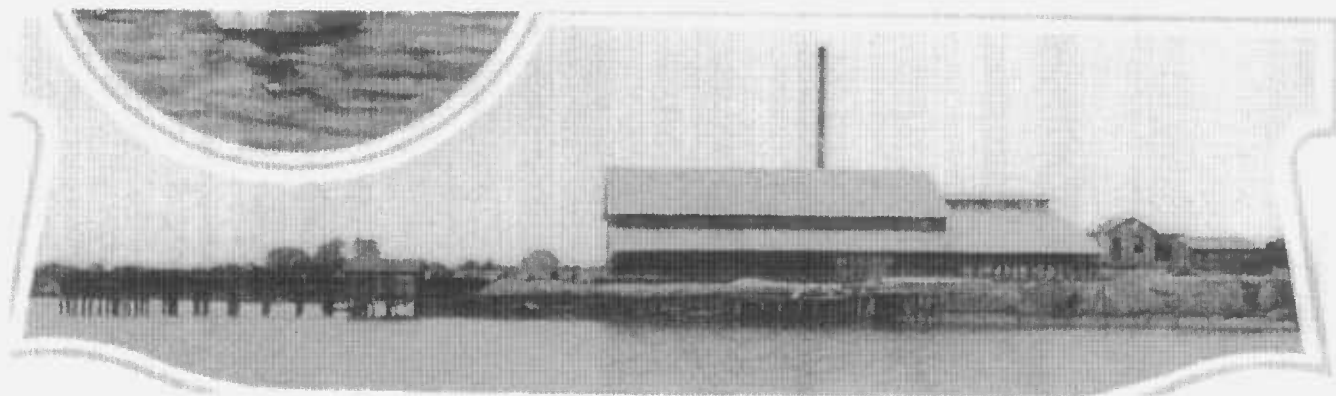
©Photogrammetric Data Services, Inc.
Map No. 1464-242 detail

↑ NORTH



CT-1280
CALVERT PACKING COMPANY BUILDING
CALVERT COUNTY, MARYLAND
U.S.G.S. 7.5 MINUTE detail
SOLOMONS ISLAND, MD, QUADRANGLE

↑ NORTH



Calvert Packing Company, ca. 1927
Photographer: George Ackerman
Scanned from Sunny Southern Maryland, a publication of the
Southern Maryland Immigration Commission
courtesy Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries

CT-1280



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Calvert Packing Company

Calvert County, Maryland

05-18-2001

Calvert Marine Museum neg. 1-92775/17

Tomato cannery building, looking South-east



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CT-1280

Calvert Packing Company
Calvert County, Maryland

Robert Hurry

05-18-2001

Calvert Marine Museum neg. 1-92775/18

Tomato cannery building, looking North-west



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CT-1280

Calvert Packing Company

Calvert County, Maryland

Kirk Ranzetta

02-11-2002

Calvert Marine Museum neg. 2165-2/2A

Tomato cannery building, looking South-Southeast



CT-1280

Calvert Packing Company

Calvert County, Maryland

Kirk Ranetta

02-11-2002

Calvert Marine Museum neg. 2165-2/22A

Detail showing southern end of west addition
to tomato cannery building, looking west.